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ABSTRACT

This paper is concerned with conceptualizing from the human potential perspective the quality of life, poverty, the "good social system", service delivery, and social indicators. Theories of Maslow and other humanistic educators which stress the need for self actualization provide a framework to sociologists for improving human conditions by allowing individuals to maximize their potential through a restructured social system. To insure the quality of life, both physiological and psychological needs muat be met. Further, the extent to which social members develop their potential will depend on social structural variables. "Goodness" of social systems can be conceptualized in terms of the psychological health of system members, and of the extent to which human potential is realized. Social indicators such as service availability and quality, income levels, and community differentiation are measures of aggregate and structural system characteristics which are indicative of the extent to which system members are able to develop their potential. In conclusion, the paper offers a starting point for a new approach towards a goal directed sociological inquiry. (SJM)

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POVERTY AND QUALITY OF LIFE: A PERSPECTIVE

by

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INTRODUCTION[1]

This paper is specifically concerned with demonstrating how quality of life, poverty, the "good social system," availability of goods and services, and social indicators can all be approached from a single perspective, which we call the "human potential framework." In addition to providing a single focal point for approaching these somewhat diverse topic areas, the "human potential framework" also suggests considerations which might well be missed by more conventional approaches.

We begin by considering first human potential. Then quality of life, poverty, the "good social system," goods and services, and social indicators are considered in turn. The relative incompleteness of the framework and the issue of reductionism are then considered briefly. The paper concludes with a summary.

Human Potential

As the names, human potential movement or humanistic psychology imply, humanistic psychologists are concerned with having human beings attain the highest possible level of personal development. They are concerned with the needs of man, with specifying the conditions necessary for psychological health and with maximization of human potential. They usually take social institutions and patterns of social organization as given and focus on how the quality of social interaction can be changed. They are concerned with making interaction more personal and with helping individuals become less self-centered and more oriented toward others, in moving them, in Maslow's terms, toward self-actualization (Goble, 1970; Maslow, 1962). Ultimately, the humanistic psychologist's usual approach to bringing about social change is by changing individuals. The possibility of improving opportunities for individuals to maximize their potential through changes in social structure has received relatively little consideration. Even though this is so, the idea of human potential, the concern for human needs and well-being. and thus, the writings of humanistic psychologists have important implications for sociology.

For Maslow, maximization of human potential involves moving to a stage of "self-actualization" (or psychological health). "...the actualization process means the development or discovery of the true self and the development of existing or latent potential." To be "self-actualized" is to be fully human. Characteristics of self-actualized persons include: creativity, flexibility, spontaneity, humility, patience, "desireless awareness," courage, "low degree of self conflict," ability to make "own decisions even in the

face of contrary popular opinion," "ability to see life clearly, to see it as it is rather than as they wish it to be" and dedication to "some work, task, duty or vocation" which they consider to be pleasurable, exciting and important. In addition self-actualized persons are characterized by "better understanding of self," "ability to love," awareness of beauty, less fear and anxiety and a "genuine desire to help the human race" (Goble, 1970: 26-36). The psychologically healthy (self-actualized) person is:

> "...both selfish and unselfish; in fact, these two attitudes merge into one. The healthy person finds happiness in helping others. Thus, for him, unselfishness is selfish...The healthy person is selfish in a healthy way, a way which is beneficial to him and to society, too." (Goble, 1970: 29-30).

In order for an individual to attain self-actualization it is necessary, according to Maslow, that needs on two levels be met--basic needs and growth needs. The basic (or deficiency) needs include physiological needs including air, water, food, shelter, sleep and sex; safety and security needs; love and belongingness needs; and esteem needs (self-esteem and esteem by others). "Frustration of basic needs creates psychopathological symptoms, and their satisfaction leads to healthy personalities; both psychological and biologically" (Goble, 1970: 50-51). Maslow assumes that the basic needs are hierarchial, that is, physiological needs are predominant until they are satisfied, then safety and security needs take precedence, then love and belongingness needs, then esteem needs. Once the basic needs (both physiological and psychological) have been satisfied, the individual moves toward and is motivated by a higher level of needs, the growth needs. According to Maslow, because of failure to meet basic needs, few people attain self-actualization (psychological health). This failure is related to social and environmental conditions.

Maslow's suggestion that certain needs must be met in order to attain psychological health is somewhat similar to Fromm's suggestion that humans have two kinds of needs--animal needs and human needs. Animal needs refer to the basic necessities for the survival of the organism. Human needs refer to what is necessary for sanity and mental health. According to Fromm:

> "The basic psychic needs stemming from the pecularities of human existence must be satisfied in one form or other, unless man is to become insane, just as his physiological needs must be met lest he die." (Fromm, 1955: 67)

Etzioni is concerned about the alienation and inauthenticity which result when social systems fail to meet the basic needs of their members. It is a basic assumption of Etzioni's sociological perspective that,

> "...there is a universal set of basic human needs which have attributes of their own which are not determined by the social structure, cultural patterns, or socialization process." (Etzioni, 1968b: 871)

For Etzioni, alienation refers to "...a social situation which is beyond the control of the actor, and hence unresponsive to his basic needs" (Etzioni, 1968b: 871). Inauthenticity is a special case of alienation in which a system "provides the appearance of responsiveness while the underlying condition is alienating" (Etzioni, 1968a:619).

Etzioni sees differences among social systems in their ability to meet the basic needs of their members. He differs from Maslow in his emphasis on changing patterns of social organization as a way of meeting basic needs. He suggests, "...most alienation is the result of a specific societal and cultural pattern and can be reduced by changing that pattern" (Etzioni, 1968a: 626).[2]

Quality of Life

The answer to what constitutes quality of life must, ultimately, reside in issues concerned with the nature of man, especially with his needs and potentials. For sociologists it would be helpful if psychologists would clearly specify the conditions under which the needs of individuals would be met and their potential would be maximized. The job of the sociologist would then be to develop knowledge which could be used to help establish social arrangements and social systems to satisfy these conditions and thereby maximize quality of life. Although psychology has not provided such information, the considerations of needs and human potential contained in the writings of Maslow and others are at least somewhat helpful.

If we accept the notion that quality of life has something to do with both the meaningfulness of and satisfaction with one's existence, then for any individual or set of individuals, quality of life is maximized when self-actualization or human potential is maximized. This has some important implications. It implies, for example, that, so far as material goods are concerned, more is not necessarily always better. If material goods are necessary to the attainment of needs then they will help in the development of human potential and improve quality of life, otherwise not. Increasing material goods (including food) and selected services is very important for developing countries and for the poor in more "developed societies." For the more affluent, however, further additions of material goods may well be redundant or even detrimental to quality of life in terms of maximization of human potential or self-actualization. And even for most poor persons, deprivation of self-esteem and feelings of powerlessness may be more serious restrictions on quality of life then deprivation of material goods (assuming at least survival levels of food and shelter).

As conceptualized here, then, quality of life is not, necessarily, a function of material well-being, although some minimum level is needed. Quality of life has more to do with the psychological health of social actors. It has to do with creativity, dignity, courage, ability to love, awareness of beauty, and lack of fear and anxiety. The social system which maximizes development of human potential is one in which quality of life is maximized.

Poverty

Poverty is an aspect of inequality in social systems. Poor persons are social system members, who suffer deprivations. They are deprived of goods, services, opportunities and dignity and they are deprived in a relative and an absolute sense. In a relative sense they have less of what is valued than other system members. The social system (whether society or community) is characterized by inequality and the poor are at the bottom. In the absolute sense of deprivation the poor are unable to obtain adequate housing, health care, food, recreation, access to respected roles or other goods and services necessary for psychological and physiological health.

According to Miller and Roby,

> "Poverty is not only a condition of economic insufficiency; it is also social and political exclusion...a minimum approach by government in any society with significant inequalities must provide for rising minimum levels, not only of (1) incomes, (2) assest, and (3) basic services but also of (4) self-respect and (5) opportunities for education and social mobility and (6) participation in many forms of decision-making." (Miller and Roby, 1970:p. 12).

In a capitalistic society, where money provides access not only to goods and services but also to power and status, poverty exists when some system members have very little money. In such a society, economic well-being, while only one aspect of poverty, is by far the best predictor of other aspects of deprivation. It is by no means an accident that the most commonly used measure of poverty is income level.

While deprivation is the key element in poverty, there are kinds and degrees of deprivation. Given a goal of development of human potential some deprivations are much more serious than others. Poverty is not a matter of deprivation in the abstract but, rather, of specific types of deprivation. According to what criteria should the importance of various types of deprivation be ranked? It is our contention that those deprivations are most serious which have the greatest impact on the ability of system members to maximize their human potential. In terms of the hierarchy of needs, deprivations, such as food, shelter, health care, if they threaten physiological survival, are clearly the most serious. Indeed, the concern of some citizens for the poor extends only to deprivations which clearly threaten the lives of the poor--"After all, you can't just let them die." Even though according to this criterion a large percent of the worlds population and even some of the U. S. population would be classified as poor, the criterion is clearly overly restrictive. Deprivations are also very important which don't immediately threaten physical survival. If Maslow is correct in his suggestion that all the basic needs are necessary to psychological health, then deprivation of any of these needs could reasonably be classified an an incidence of poverty. This would suggest that economic well-being is a necessary but not sufficient condition for quality of life. It suggests that in terms of ability to maximize their potential many persons

with substantial incomes would also be poor.

If poverty is conceptualized in terms of deprivations, then we can think in terms of two levels of poverty. At the lowest level is First Degree Poverty (Poverty I) which corresponds to deprivation of physiological needs. Above this would be Second Degree Poverty (Poverty II), corresponding to deprivation of needs for safety and security; love and belongingness, self-esteem and esteem by others.

In this approach an individual is poor if his basic needs are not satisfied at a level sufficient to sustain physiological (Poverty I) or psychological health (Poverty II). This is an unusual way of conceptualizing poverty. It rests on the assumption that poverty is a matter not only of access to goods and services but also involves much more. Implicitly, access to goods and services, e.g., housing and medical care, is very important since Poverty I is considered to be more serious than Poverty II. In terms of national goals, development programs and strategies of social change, one would expect elimination of Poverty I to have priority over Poverty II. But if complex industrial societies are concerned with increasing quality of life, they must also explicitly direct attention to considerations of the safety, security, belongingness and esteem needs of all citizens (Poverty II).

It is a basic assumption of this paper that the extent to which social system members develop their potential is primarily a function of social structural variables (rather than individual level variables). This is as true of the poor as of other system members. When we consider the characteristics of the poor we should be careful not to fall into the trap of confusing the symptoms with the causes of poverty. Poverty is an aspect of

social inequality in social systems and the poor are victims (Ryan, 1972). Knowledge of the characteristics of heads of poor households is useful in predicting which families will be poor but it is the structure of economic and political systems which determines whether or not extreme deprivations will exist. For example, the present structure of American Society guarantees that some will be poor (Stockdale, 1972(a)).

The "Good Social System"

If the ability of social actors to develop their potential is to be enhanced, extensive changes in social systems are necessary. This position was forcefully put forth by Marx and Engels who

> "...believed that whether self-actualization did or did not take place was largely, if not wholly, a social question.... The humanization of man could occur only as society itself was reconstructed so that all systems of exploitation were ended once for all." (Bensman and Rosenberg, 1966: 213).

The main thrust of Skinner's Beyond Freedom and Dignity is that it is possible to remake man by redesigning the social environment.

> "It is the environment that is "responsible" for...objectionable behavior, and it is the environment, not some attribute of the individual, that we must seek to change." (Skinner, 1971: 52).

> "Perhaps we cannot now design a successful culture as a whole, but we can design better practices, piecemeal." (Skinner, 1971: 73).

Etzioni's Active Society is a prescription for changing societies in order to make them more responsive to the needs of their members. "There is a need for dynamic interchange between personal self-realization and societal activation" (Etzioni, 1968a:15). "Our main concern...is...for the societal and political conditions under which history will be made more responsive to man" (Etzioni, 1968a: 13).

The literature on utopian systems from Plato, through Thomas More and on to the present, expresses repeatedly the need to remake social systems in order to maximize certain human values. But which values should be maximized and how can this be accomplished? What consititutes a "good social system?" And how can it be attained?

Although we can't yet fill in the specifics, the human potential framework does suggest some general characteristics of "good" communities and societies. Such systems would be structured to satisfy basic needs. They would make available to all members adequate goods and services, e.g., food, housing, medical care, to assure their physical well-being. The structure and content of social relations would be such that needs for love, belongingness, and esteem would be met. In such a system individuals would have the opportunity to develop their creativity and to be involved in meaningful activity. Individuals and their abilities would be taken seriously--persons would be ends, rather than means. Individual freedom and responsibility for the well-being of others would be optimized. Neither Poverty I nor Poverty II would exist. Such a system would, in short, provide opportunities for all members to meet their physiological needs and would be responsive, authentic and just.

These general considerations tell us little about the specific structure of a "good social system" since there is no necessary one-to-one correspondence between specific structural arrangements and satisfaction of specific needs. The problem of designing the good social system is thus, extremely complex. A wide range of structural alternatives are possible and it is likely that arrangements which facilitate satisfaction of one need may well thwart satisfaction of others (Warren, 1970). And, as has already been indicated,

our knowledge of the basic needs, themselves, is only fragmentary. If "good social systems," including primary groups, agencies and organizations, communities and societies, are to be designed, investigation is needed into needs and into the extent to which various social structural arrangements and social processes facilitate need satisfaction.

Goods and Services

An important aspect of any society is the way it allocates goods and services, including food, housing and health care, which are needed in order to meet the basic needs of system members. In highly complex societies special institutional arrangements to provide additional services such as education, child care and legal assistance are also necessary.

In considering adequacy of goods and services, two important considerations are the absolute amount of a good or service available and its distribution. The quality of the good or service (including the manner in which it is delivered) is also very important.

Quantity and Distribution. If the basic needs of all members of a social system are to be met it is necessary that an adequate supply of all needed goods and services exist and that they be allocated in such a way that all get at least the minimum needed amount. If food, housing, medicine or medical personnel are in short supply, some will necessarily suffer deprivations. This is an important problem in many developing countries. In complex industrial societies, if such shortages exist (e.g, housing, medical care), the problem is, in reality, an allocation problem, since resources devoted to the production of other goods or services, (e.g., weapons) could have been allocated to the production of needed goods and services. The

basic service delivery problem in complex industrial societies such as the United States, is then, an allocation problem. (The problem has two parts: 1) allocation of resources and skills to production of alternative goods and services and 2) allocation of the goods and services to potential consumers.) The severity of this allocation problem is indicated by the fact that the rate of post-neonatal infant mortality in the United States is approximately three times as great for poor as nonpoor children (Hunger, U. S. A., 1968: 34).

While some services such as elementary education, are made available in the public sector, access to most other goods and services in the United States is obtained in the "economic marketplace"--people get what they can buy. In such a situation if some persons have inadequate financial resources they are deprived of goods and services. Much of the concern for service delivery for the poor has been a concern for providing services (e.g., medical, legal) which the poor cannot afford to purchase or for providing services (e.g., counseling) to counteract the negative outcomes of the deprivations suffered by the poor. Given the present structure of American Society such an emphasis is not completely misplaced, but if the goods and services needed by all citizens were in adequate supply and if the poor had money, then they would not need special services (in fact Poverty I would be eliminated).

The allocation problem applies not only to class levels but also to geographic areas. In several rural New York counties the supply of goods and services is inadequate (Stockdale, 1972b). For example, while most rural New York counties have both day care and head start, they seldom are able to serve more than one-fifth of the eligible children. Some areas

of services are subject to a "false equilibrium." That is the availability of the service and the expressed demand seem to be in balance; the supply is assumed to be adequate because there are not pressing demands for services. In reality, however, the need for the service greatly exceeds its availability. As waiting lists get longer, or the service staff acts in ways which discourage application for service some needy persons quietly do without. When the agency adds additional staff and this becomes known, new applications for service occur until the acency again becomes overloaded and finally a new "equilibrium" is established. The author has observed this in the areas of legal services and mental health. In such cases the "false equilibrium" is tolerated because the more affluent population segments are receiving adequate service, inadequacy of services for the poor is not well recognized and the poor have little power.

Quality and Manner of Delivery. Simple availability of goods and services is not sufficient to assure that the basic needs of system members will be met. If psychological needs are to be met, responsiveness in providing the good or service is also important. The good or service should be appropriate to needs and should be provided in a way which enhances the self-image of the person who obtains it. What is appropriate for some persons may not be appropriate for others. In considering the preparedness of poor children for school and the preparedness of schools for poor children, Ryan states,

> "Middle class kids are better able to distinguish between words that sound alike, are better able to perceive colors and shapes, and, in imitating their parent's speech, have learned to talk in a style similar to that of most teachers. Thus, the middle class child is somewhat better prepared for the school experience than is the lower class child. But it would not be unreasonable to present this proposition in its reversed form: the school is better prepared for the middle class child than for the lower class child. (Ryan, 1972: p. 35, emphasis added).

This is not an argument for special services for the poor but, rather, a suggestion that if basic needs of all persons are to be met existing services must be provided more responsively.

One agency which has been criticized for relating to clients in ways which are detrimental to their self-images, is the Department of Social Services. It is not uncommon for social welfare caseworkers to have negative attitudes, not only toward specific clients but toward welfare recipients in general (Stockdale, 1972). Assuming the validity of Maslow's contention that the needs for belongingness and esteem are basic to psychological health, there is a sense in which some service agencies, in some of their activities, actually operate to decrease the chances for maximizing human potential and thus quality of life.

If relationships between needs and services were better understood it would be possible to assign priorities to services on the basis of the needs served.

Social Indicators

It has been suggested that the "goodness" of social systems, adequacy of service delivery, severity of poverty, and quality of life can each be conceptualized in terms of the psychological health of system members, in terms of the extent to which human potential is realized. It has been further suggested that a reasonable goal for sociology is the creation of knowledge for use in designing social systems which maximize human potential, to create knowledge about the characteristics of "good social systems" (whether organizations, communities or societies) and how they can be achieved. Such an approach assumes that given enough theoretical and empirical work, basic characteristics of the

"good community" and the "good society" can be isolated and measured; that adequacy of service delivery, the severity of poverty and the effects of public policy and programs can also be measured. Since these have been conceptualized here in terms of human potential, it seems clear that they should also be measured from this perspective. While we will call these measures "social indicators," our use of the term is restrictive. We are specifically concerned with measures or indicators which in some way index a) the extent to which human potential is realized by system members or b) system characteristics which may reasonably be expected to be associated with development of potential by system members. Such measures are indicators, then, both of the "health" of system members and subunits and of the "health" of the system itself. The indicators would then serve to measure the extent to which system resources and their distribution and patterns of social organization are adequate to satisfy the needs of system members. (See Wilcox, et. al., 1972 for a summary of approaches to social indicators and a selected bibliography.)

The psychological health of system members would not necessarily be measured directly. The emphasis would be on measuring aggregate and structural characteristics of social systems, which on the basis of theory (largely yet to be developed), would be to be indicative of or related to development of human potential or quality of life. Rates of suicide and mental illness are examples of measures which get at psychological well-being fairly directly. Indicators of service availability and quality, income levels, and community differentiation measure system characteristics assumed to be related to opportunities for development of human potential.

Additional Considerations

At this point the reader is very likely concerned with at least two problems. The first is the problem of completeness. (Having read the paper where do we go from here?) The second is the question of whether the contents of this paper are sociological; whether, in spite of the emphasis on the need to change social structure, this constitutes yet another attempt to reduce sociology to psychology. Before summarizing the basic arguments of the paper these issues will be considered in turn.

Completeness. There is a sense in which this paper is exploratory. It has been concerned with demonstrating that several important areas of concern can be approached from a common perspective. It has further been concerned with showing that, when this is done, relationships between the areas become more evident and new ways of conceptualizing phenomena become clear. Specifically, quality of life is based on the satisfaction of needs and development of potential, poverty is a situation of deprivation, goods and services are necessary to meet needs and facilitate development of potential, the good society is one which maximizes the extent to which system members develop their potential, and social indicators are measures of aggregate and structural system characteristics which are indicative of or related to the extent to which system members are able to develop their potential. In such a framework community growth or increases in material well-being are not ends in themselves. Their relationship to quality of life is seen as problematic and should be the subject of future inquiry.

This paper, then, is intended as a starting point for a new approach to important issues. It raises more questions than it answers but hopefully, it also suggests where the answers must be sought. It raises, for example,

the question of the relative contribution of various services to meeting human needs. Regarding social indicators, the paper suggests something about what they are ultimately to measure but fails to suggest the actual measures. Even though answering these questions is beyond the purposes of this paper, they are questions which can be answered. And, if the framework presented here is sound, they should be answered. The paper is intended then as a starting point for goal directed sociological inquiry.

Sociology and Reductionism. The paper suggests that an important goal of sociology is to provide information which can be used to improve the human condition--the ultimate concern is with the well-being of individuals. This is not at all the same as suggesting that the content and methods of sociology can be reduced to those of psychology. Certainly increased emphasis on relationships between social structure and individual well-being is urged. The principal concern of sociology, however, is still with the structure of social systems, with patterns and dynamics of social relationships, with social processes and with social change. Focusing on relationships between social arrangements and processes and the development of human potential, provides a useful perspective from which to attack such important issues as quality of life, poverty, the "good social system," service delivery and social indicators. While much work is needed by both sociologists and psychologists on these issues, the central concern of sociologists must still be with analysis of social structure, social processes and social change.

Summary

The concern of this paper has been with conceptualizing quality of life, poverty, the "good social system," service delivery and social indicators from one perspective, the human potential perspective. We have shown not only that each of these important areas can be approached from this perspective but also that this perspective raises certain unique issues, e.g., the possibility of considering two levels of poverty based on severity of deprivation. Table 1 summarizes the application of the human potential perspective to each of the areas of inquiry considered in the various sections of the paper and to the problem of selecting, analyzing and evaluating social change strategies, programs and policies (see Table 1).

Table 1.

The Human Potential Framework Applied to Quality of Life, Poverty, Service Delivery, the "Good Social System," Social Indicators, and Planned Social Change.

	Individual Level	Social System Level (especially community and society)
Human Potential	The human potential framework is concerned with self-actualization, with "development or discovery of the true self and the development of existing or latent potential," with becoming fully human. In order for individual to attain self-actualization, needs on two levels must be met--basic needs and growth needs. Basic needs can be arranged on a hierarchy of prepotency	
Quality of Life	Quality of life involves meeting both physiological and psychological needs. Quality of life is maximized when human potential is maximized.	Quality of life in a social system is maximized when development of human potential by system members is maximized.

Table 1 (continued).

	Individual Level	Social System Level (especially community and society)
Poverty	Poverty is a situation of needs deprivation. Severity of deprivation can be rank ordered, resulting in types of poverty: Poverty I--Deprivation of physiological needs. Poverty II--Deprivation of other basic needs. Deprivation but not poverty--Deprivation of growth needs.	Poverty exists in a social system when system members experience needs deprivation. Systems can be characterized by percent of system members at the two poverty levels. Existence of poverty in social systems is largely a function of distribution of resources, services, status (respect) and power.
The "Good Social System"		The "good social system" is one in which social relations and the allocation of resources, services, status (respect) and power are conducive to maximization of human potential. Once relationships between system characteristics and needs are better understood it will be possible to rank social systems in terms of the extent to which they facilitate development of human potential.

Table 1 (continued).

	Individual Level	Social System Level (especially community and society)
Delivery of Goods and Services	Physiological and psychological health is influenced by availability of goods and services to meet needs. Once relationships between services and needs are better understood, it will be possible to assign priorities to services on the basis of their contribution to development of human potential.	Availability and adequacy of goods and services in social system is influenced by characteristics of service delivery systems and the way they function, by quantity (including access to), and quality (including manner in which provided) of services. Once priorities have been assigned to services it will be possible to rank social systems in terms of adequacy of service delivery.
Social Indicators		Social indicators are tools for facilitating comparative analysis of social systems and their characteristics and for analyzing changes over time. Indicators should be selected on the basis of their ability to measure (and monitor changes in) quality of life and related social system characteristics.

Table 1 (continued).

	Individual Level	Social System Level (especially community and society)
Planned Social Change	Many social change programs are explicitly concerned with eliminating or reducing need deprivation. Once relationships between various change activities and needs are understood it should be possible to select and evaluate individual oriented change strategies in terms of their contribution to development of human potential.	Once relationships 1) between system characteristics and needs and 2) between change strategies and system characteristics are understood, it should be possible to select and evaluate system oriented change strategies in terms of their contribution to development of human potential.

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FOOTNOTES

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2. We are well aware that the notion of basic needs (and more particularly Maslow's heirarchy of needs) is rejected by many social scientists. While it hasn't been clearly demonstrated that such needs exist, neither has it been demonstrated that they do not. If they do in fact exist and if their relationships to social patterns and processes are discovered, a great deal of light will be shed on a wide range of social policy issues.

   In this paper we follow Etzioni's example in assuming that: 1) basic needs exist, 2) relationships between patterns of social organization and satisfaction of basic needs can be discovered and 3) in principle, social systems can be restructured in order to more effectively meet basic needs, reduce alienation and enhance development of human potential.

   Another basic assumption is that constructing social systems in which possibilities for development of human potential are maximized is "good" and that providing information which will lead to this end should be the major goal of sociology.